

EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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PRESS RELEASE

DHAKA, Bangladesh (Dec 1) -- Bangladesh and American relief efforts in support of Cyclone Sidr victims are in high gear and succeeding on a number of fronts, according to the US Marine leading American military efforts here.

"This relief effort is running on all eight cylinders," said Brig Gen Ronald Bailey, 3rd Marine Expeditionary Brigade commanding general.

The 3rd MEB is leading military efforts in support of a larger United States response to aid victims of the Nov 15 cyclone that killed nearly 3,300 people. The overall United States effort is being led by the State Department and U.S. Agency for International Development.

"When our operational forces first got here Nov 23, the most critical need, according to the Bangladeshi government, was fresh water," said Bailey. All told, we delivered more than 47,000 liters of water in less than a week."

Though water was the MEB's first priority, after a recent coordination meeting with Bangladeshi counterparts their main focus has now shifted to food. "We're using all of the resources we can to get food out to the areas the Bangladeshi government says they need it the most," said Bailey. Much of that food is government of Bangladesh food stocks that are flown by C-130 aircraft from here to the southern city of Barisal.

From there, it's flown by helicopter to areas it's needed the most. As of Nov. 30, MEB forces had delivered more than 73,000 pounds of food and supplies.

Along with food, water, and other supplies, the MEB has also provided urgently needed medical care. On Nov. 26, an 18-person MEB Army medical team deployed to the city of Patuakhali to support the district hospital there. The team took with them an Interagency Emergency Health Kit that contained essential medicines and medical devices urgently needed in a disaster situation. The IEHK is designed to support the health needs of 10,000 people for a period of three months. Two days after the Army team deployed, four MEB Navy medical teams began visits to different remote sites to provide immediate health care needs for persons in those areas.

"On the medical side, we've had success on three main fronts," said Capt David Lane, 3rd MEB surgeon. "First, we've partnered very well with the host nation medical system. That includes district civil surgeons, permanent nongovernmental organizations, and, of course, the Bangladeshi armed forces.

"Secondly, our mobile medical teams have provided active disease surveillance that will help the Bangladeshi government target appropriate preventive water and sanitation services after we depart," said Lane.

"Finally, by delivering direct primary care, we've improved the short term health of people we've cared for," he added.

As of Nov 30, the medical teams had treated more than 1,738 medical cases, 131 dental patients and 133 veterinary cases.

"We're doing what we came here to do," said Bailey, "and that is to meet the critical needs of the Bangladeshi government. Once that is complete, it will be time for us to go home." When the III MEU

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departs, other elements of the United States government, including the Department of State, USAID, and Pacific Command will continue to develop and implement recovery and rehabilitation programs as part of their ongoing activities in Bangladesh.

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